

### Accelerating Progress toward Sindh's FP2020 Goals

Building on its global expertise in policy advocacy for family planning, Health Policy Plus (HP+), a five-year project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has worked in Pakistan over the past two years to create a policy environment that supports the country in fulfilling its family planning commitments.

In particular, HP+ provided support to the Sindh government to make progress toward achieving the province's family planning goals through execution of a Costed Implementation Plan (CIP), a multi-year roadmap designed to help governments achieve family planning goals by prioritizing interventions, engaging stakeholders, forecasting costs, and mobilizing resources to meet gaps in health services. HP+ has also been successful in creating motivated champions for family planning—journalists, women leaders, male social mobilizers, and other decision-makers and stakeholders needed to mobilize technical and financial resources to execute the CIP and support the government in meeting its FP2020 commitments.

Some featured highlights of HP+'s work in Pakistan are:

#### Cultivating Male Champions for Family Planning



Programs that effectively engage men in health decision making and behavior change can contribute to improvements in health outcomes for women, men, and families, particularly in traditional, male-dominated societies like Pakistan. HP+, in collaboration with Sindh's Population Welfare Department (PWD) and CIP Secretariat, held a series of workshops to engage a group of male champions in advocating for family planning at the community level. HP+ trained 36 men from community-based organizations to become sukhi ghar (happy home) counselors, who will conduct monthly sessions on family planning for 50 men from their union councils. HP+ also trained 80 male social mobilizers and 30 taluka population welfare officers from PWD across Sindh. The workshops were instrumental in mobilizing community men and government workers to become family planning practitioners and advocates.

#### Women's Leadership Initiative



Investing in women's leadership can yield significant positive gains for women as well as for the institutions they represent, their communities, and society. Through the Women's Leadership Initiative, HP+ selected 22 women in Sindh, across government and civil society, to participate in a capacity development program to strengthen individual and collective leadership, policy advocacy, and joint accountability capabilities. The program

included a practicum to apply new knowledge and skills and forge new relationships within and across stakeholder groups interested in holding decision-makers responsible for meeting Pakistan's FP2020 commitments, particularly with regard to youth.

Through joint advocacy and accountability efforts, the women leaders directly influenced key policy documents to ensure provisions for youth-friendly family planning services. They succeeded in:

- Defining and adding youth-friendly family planning standards to the Manual of Standards for Family Planning Services, Sindh
- Adding youth-specific indicators to the CIP performance monitoring plan
- Sensitizing district-level policymakers and implementers at the Sindh Forum on Youth Engagement for FP2020 on the importance of expanding family planning services for young couples

The CIP Secretariat has emphasized that it views these women leaders as a key technical resource from whom support will be requested following the conclusion of HP+'s presence in Pakistan.

## Fostering Media Engagement in Family Planning



Members of the media are an important group to engage on family planning as they have access to communications channels where policy issues can be raised. They can report on implementation of family planning policies and programs and hold governments accountable for achieving family planning goals. To engage journalists, HP+ conducted a workshop on family planning and development for 27 journalists representing print and electronic media in Urdu, Sindhi, and English language newspapers and television channels. HP+ continued to work with the journalists through a Reproductive Health Fellows Program, providing support in story development and connecting them to experts in the field. Following the workshop, the journalists published 16 articles on reproductive health, family planning, and the CIP in leading newspapers across Sindh, creating awareness about these critical topics and encouraging government institutions to implement family planning policies effectively.

Following the success of the media workshop, HP+ supported the CIP Secretariat to establish a media forum to increase focus on and coverage of family planning and reproductive health issues in the media. The forum gained high-level interest and commitment from policymakers and media houses alike, and now serves as a platform to raise awareness of population and development issues, including implementation of family planning policies and services.

## Strengthening Population Sector Stewardship



To improve coordination between the departments of Health and Population Welfare for family planning service provision—a critical component of successful CIP implementation—HP+ supported the development of a letter of agreement between the departments to work in partnership to achieve Sindh's FP2020 commitments. The letter institutionalizes coordination between the two departments by outlining,



for the first time, each department's roles and responsibilities related to family planning services and focuses on mobilizing existing district technical committees and district health program management teams in each of Sindh's 29 districts to improve service delivery coordination, stakeholder communication, and shared data collection, management, and reporting. The agreement letter is an important step forward in institutionalizing the government's commitments to collaborate in order to strengthen accessibility to and quality of family planning services in Sindh.

Another component of HP+'s success in strengthening population sector stewardship in Sindh relates to district technical committees, which can serve as effective forums to bring together stakeholders to ensure the smooth delivery of family planning services. In partnership with the CIP Secretariat, HP+ conducted an assessment of these committees in two districts, Dadu and Jamshoro, highlighting achievements and gaps with detailed recommendations for improved functionality at the district level. Moving forward, these recommendations will support the Sindh government to improve the performance of district technical committees and provision of family planning services in the province.

## Engaging the Private Sector for Quality Family Planning Services



In Sindh, the private sector plays a critical role in the delivery of family planning services, representing a greater share of the family planning market than the public sector—an estimated 54 percent, the highest in Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> However, the private sector's provision of family planning is largely unregulated and standards of care are uneven. Creating linkages for public-private partnerships to reach vulnerable sections of the population is a primary component of CIP implementation. With technical support from HP+, the CIP Secretariat developed a private sector engagement framework for Sindh. The framework strengthens coordination between the public and private health sectors to improve delivery of quality family planning services, including the manufacture and sustained supply of commodities as well as the sharing of data and information between the sectors regarding family planning services and quality of care.

<sup>1</sup> Government of Sindh. 2015. *Costed Implementation Plan (CIP) on Family Planning for Sindh*.

Additionally, the FP2020 Taskforce, established by the Sindh government, created a Private Sector Engagement Subgroup and designated HP+ as its technical lead. The group, which will continue to meet following the conclusion of the HP+ project in Pakistan, serves as a platform to bring together stakeholders from the public and private sectors to promote quality care and strategize on expanding the provision of family planning services in Sindh.

## Strengthening Policy Advocacy



The Sindh Population Welfare Department is working on highlighting the impact of rapid population growth on development, and sharing this information throughout the provincial government, so that other sectors include a focus on population growth in their work. To assist the department, HP+ supported the government to generate and interpret relevant evidence and develop messages in English, Urdu, and Sindhi that effectively engage government departments in thinking about population and development issues.

In collaboration with the Population Welfare Department, HP+ applied the RAPID, ImpactNow, and ImpactNow Youth policy models and developed evidence-based advocacy materials that highlight the impact of population on development, demonstrating how reducing rapid population growth can help promote achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The department uses this data to advocate for increased investment in family planning in various settings, including high-level provincial meetings, international health conferences, and on a popular television morning show. These materials will remain with the CIP Secretariat as advocacy tools to share with policymakers throughout the government for greater programmatic and financial investment in family planning programs.

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